



January 2018

## License Plate on the Railroad Line of War

### *Preservation supporter "tracks" history of Civil War era depots*

The East Tennessee Railroad represented one of the most strategic transportation arteries for military campaigns during the Civil War. Completed in 1858, this railroad was the most direct connection from the Deep South states and the war-sustaining agricultural and manufacturing products they produced, to the Capitol at Richmond and the armies defending it. The East Tennessee railroad figured prominently in the Kentucky Campaign of 1862 and the Chickamauga-Chattanooga and Knoxville campaigns of 1863.

In 1861 East Tennessee Unionists sabotaged the Confederate controlled railroad bridges and after gaining control in 1863, forced Confederate General Longstreet's Corps to detour on a circuitous route through the Carolinas in order to reinforce Bragg. The longer route caused Longstreet's infantry and most of his artillery and transportation to arrive too late to participate in the Battle of Chickamauga.

After 1863, the railroad remained primarily under Union control with most of its bridges and many stations guarded by small garrisons and blockhouses.



*The Niota depot is the only surviving Civil War era depot (1854) along the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad line. After Union occupation of East Tennessee in 1863, Federals occupied this depot, then known as "Mouse Creek." As a defense fortification, Federal soldiers removed bricks to create gun ports in the walls...still visible today. The depot remained in Union control despite Confederate cavalry destruction of the tracks for miles on both sides of the depot.*



*About seven miles north of the Niota depot, a parking lot marks the location of the Sweetwater depot (ca. 1852). The depot was the northernmost station controlled by the Confederate Army and served as a staging area for an attack on Knoxville. Like Mouse Creek, in 1863, the depot came under control of a Federal garrison and remained so after several Confederate attempts to reoccupy Sweetwater. Confederates burned the depot during one of the fights.*

### **Send Us a Photo of Your Plate**

Share a photo of your Civil War license plate at a Tennessee battlefield or Civil War site. Email your photo and name of the battlefield or site to [info@tcwpa.org](mailto:info@tcwpa.org). We'll do the rest. Help tell the stories of Tennessee's Civil War history.

### **A Conversation Starter**

Noticed the Civil War license plate on another vehicle lately? As you drive the state be on the lookout for fellow preservationists who have the plate on their vehicle. Meet people who share your support for battlefield preservation or stop to compliment you on a good looking tag. They're great conversation starters!



### **Complimentary Membership**

If you've purchased a Civil War Battlefield preservation license plate you are eligible for a complimentary 1-year membership in TCWPA. For more information visit

[tcwpa.org/license-plate](http://tcwpa.org/license-plate).

You can purchase the license plate at your County Clerk's office for \$36.00 plus your regular registration fees. Proceeds from the sale of the plate will help protect and interpret important battlefields in Tennessee. For more information, visit: [tcwpa.org/license-plate](http://tcwpa.org/license-plate)

